

and organizations. She has led the school's math and science teams to victory while attaining some personal awards. Recently, Kim was accepted to Stanford University.

I wish to offer my congratulations to Kim. I would also like to recognize her parents and the faculty of Birdville High School for their outstanding commitment to Kim's education. I wish her even greater success as she continues her education, and I am proud to represent her in the 26th District of Texas.

U.S. TROOP READINESS, VETERANS' HEALTH, AND IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 25, 2007

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this conference report because it recognizes the reality on the ground in Iraq. It's past time for the President to recognize that reality and to change course in Iraq.

As events in Iraq have shown repeatedly over the last 4 years, we are fighting an insurgency that retains the support of the Iraqi people. Every previous troop increase the President has implemented has failed to achieve its stated end: to reduce the violence and buy time for Iraq's government to work out a political solution to end the insurgency. So far, the President's latest troop surge has produced the same result: The insurgents have adapted, our casualties are rising, and Iraq's leaders are no closer to a political settlement that will end the fighting than they were before the "surge" began.

This week, the Government Accountability Office provided fresh evidence that events in Iraq are spiraling out of control.

GAO Comptroller General David Walker testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense on April 23 that "Despite U.S. and Iraqi efforts to shift a greater share of the country's defense on Iraqi forces, the security situation continues to deteriorate." Mr. Walker further noted that "in November 2006, the State Department reported that corruption and infiltration by militias and others loyal to parties other than the Iraqi government have resulted in the Iraqi security forces being part of the problem in many areas instead of the solution." So despite multiple changes in our approach to training Iraq's security forces over the past 4 years, they remain just as sectarianly fragmented, undermanned and infiltrated by insurgents as when we began the process in 2003.

Additionally, Iraq's civilian government shows no signs of reforming itself. Indeed, as Mr. Walker noted in his testimony, "Some Iraqi ministries, including the Ministries of Interior, Agriculture, Health, Transportation, and Tourism, are led by ministers whose allegiance is to political parties hostile to U.S. goals. These ministers use their positions to pursue partisan agendas that conflict with the goal of building a government that represents all ethnic groups."

The Iraqi population continues to support the insurgents. Iraq's security forces remain ineffective, corrupt, and infiltrated by insurgents. Iraq's sectarian civil war rages. Key

Iraqi Government ministers are actively working against stated American aims in Iraq. And the President of the United States wants this Congress to write him a blank check to continue funding this failed policy.

Fortunately, the conference report before us rejects the President's failed approach and holds him and the Iraqi Government accountable for events on the ground in this civil war-ravaged country. Passing this bill will send a clear message to Iraq's leaders that the patience of the American people has limits. Passing this bill is the best way to pressure Iraq's leaders to do what is necessary to end their civil war, because this Congress will not leave American troops in the crossfire between Iraq's sectarian factions year after year. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for this bill.

RECOGNIZING CARRIE BAGNELL AS SANTA ROSA COUNTY, FL 2007 ROOKIE TEACHER OF THE YEAR

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 26, 2007

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, it is an honor for me to rise today to recognize Carrie Bagnell as Santa Rosa County's Rookie Teacher of the Year.

Carrie Bagnell joined the Santa Rosa School District in 2006, with a background in Elementary Education from Indiana University. Ms. Bagnell is currently in her first year of teaching, where she teaches kindergarten at West Navarre Primary School in Navarre, FL.

Throughout her inaugural year of teaching, Carrie Bagnell has gained experience and training in phonics, literacy block, classroom organization and management, grants, and education of students with exceptionalities, ESE. Above all, she has earned the heart and respect of her students and the school community. Out of her passion for teaching and her love for children, Carrie Bagnell is the positive force behind each student's growth of mind, by giving them the confidence, knowledge, and inspiration needed to succeed.

The Rookie Teacher of the Year recognizes one teacher in his or her third year or less of teaching, and to be honored as Rookie of the Year places Carrie Bagnell among the great teachers in northwest Florida. Santa Rosa County is honored to have her as one of its own.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I am proud to recognize Carrie Bagnell on this outstanding achievement and her exemplary service in the Santa Rosa County School District.

IN HONOR OF RICHARD GRESKO AND EXPRESSING THAT HE SHOULD RECEIVE THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR HIS COURAGEOUS ACTIONS ON MARCH 11, 1970 IN VIETNAM

HON. PATRICK J. MURPHY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 26, 2007

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute Richard Gresko, one of America's true heroes. The reason for my statement today, however, is to correct a grave injustice done to him by our country.

In March of 1970 Richard Gresko was in Vietnam serving as a lance corporal in the United States Marine Corps. On the night of March 11, 1970 Gresko was leading three of his fellow marines in an ambush to protect a village from the Viet Cong. Around midnight Gresko's team was surprised from behind by the enemy. A firefight ensued and one of the enemy threw a grenade in between Gresko and his men.

As the citation on his military award reads, "With complete disregard for his own personal safety and fully aware of the dangers involved, he unhesitatingly threw himself on top of the grenade, absorbing most of the blast fragments with his own body in order to protect his men from certain injury and possible death." Despite being painfully wounded, Gresko continued to direct his men in combat. When he was helicoptered out to receive medical treatment, he continued to give information about the enemy despite bleeding profusely with hundreds of pieces of shrapnel in his face, arms and chest. Madam Speaker, it is a miracle that he survived.

Madam Speaker, I wish I could be here today to say that Richard Gresko, a man who unhesitatingly risked his own life to save his fellow marines, received the recognition that he deserves, but sadly I cannot. Mr. Gresko's bravery, sacrifice, and valor are beyond question, yet he has not been honored as he should. To truly honor this brave American, he should be awarded the Medal of Honor. Despite the fact that Gresko's commanding officer immediately put him in for the Medal of Honor, 6 years would pass before any recognition of Mr. Gresko's heroism was made by our Nation when he was awarded the Navy Cross.

Madam Speaker, as a former soldier I appreciate the amount of courage and bravery it takes to do what Mr. Gresko did for his men. There is no room for subjectivity in this matter. Richard Gresko risked his life to save men under his command. That is the highest form of sacrifice a serviceman can make and it deserves the highest honor that our Nation can bestow.

For over 30 years Mr. Gresko has patiently waited for the recognition that he deserves. His case has undergone countless reviews but each time is caught in a web of bureaucracy and dead ends. It is high time that we honor this hero and pay tribute to him for what he did for us. For that reason, Madam Speaker, I am introducing a bill to authorize and request that the President of the United States award Richard Gresko the Medal of Honor for his acts of valor on March 11, 1970, in Vietnam.